

The entire people responded together and said, “Everything that Hashem has spoken we will do.” (19:8)

Chazal (Midrash Shir Hashirim 1:24) teach that giving the *Torah* to *Klal Yisrael* was not as simple as it seems. The *Torah* was Hashem’s gift to us, yet, it is the *raison d’être* of Creation. If we do not observe the *Torah*, there is no ultimate purpose for our existence. Thus, when Hashem was about to give the *Torah*, He asked for guarantors who would ensure that *Klal Yisrael* would abide by the *Torah*. The nation replied: "Let our ancestors, the three Patriarchs, be our guarantors." Hashem replied: "Your forefathers themselves need guarantors." Apparently, as perfect as the Patriarchs were, Hashem found them to be insufficient guarantors. Avraham *Avinu* had questioned Hashem, *Bamah eida?* "How shall I know that I will inherit the land?" Yitzhak’s love for *Eisav*, whom Hashem reviled, precluded him from serving as guarantor. Yaakov, too, had complaints about his life’s travail, that Hashem removed His Divine Providence from him. (While all of this on the surface seems petty, we must remember that Hashem demands complete perfection.)

Finally, the nation brought forth their future, their children: "Let them be our good guarantors." Hashem agreed and, by their virtue, we were able to receive the *Torah*. The questions which surface are obvious: Why was it necessary to provide guarantors? The giving of the *Torah* did not involve a loan or sale on credit. Why were the saintly Patriarchs so easily disqualified? Are we to believe that all their merits did not outweigh their minor infractions?

Horav Baruch Dov Povarsky, shlita, explains that clearly the *arvus*, guarantorship, for the *Torah* was different than that which one makes concerning a loan. If the borrower does not pay the loan, the guarantor pays it instead. This was not the case with regard to the *Torah*. Hashem required a guarantee that the Jews would abide by its precepts. The people responded: "Let the *Avos* be our guarantors!" Hashem countered: It is true that the *Avos* can imbue their descendants with their lofty attributes, so that they would keep the *Torah*. This, however, is possible only when there is *shleimus gemurah*, complete perfection, which, the *Avos* did not attain. True, they were the greatest Jews who have ever lived, but Hashem found them deficient (on their exact level).

After hearing the reason for the Patriarchs’ disqualification, the people realized that the purpose of guarantorship was not about personal virtue or education alone. It had to extend to ensuring integrity in transmitting *Torah* to future generations. In order to bring up one’s children morally, the parent must perfect himself before he can successfully transmit our heritage to his offspring. Thus, the Jewish people found, in their own sense of responsibility, that the ultimate guarantors must be their children, ensuring loyalty to *Torah*. Parents must wake up and realize that their children watch their every move. When they sense a lack of spiritual integrity, it becomes difficult, almost hypocritical, to impart proper virtues. Thus, if we want them to abide by the *Torah*, it must begin with us.